THE RAGTIME SOCIETY

DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF CLASSIC RAGTIME

P.O. BOX 8 KING, ONT., CANADA

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This is a fairly slim issue, due mainly to the traditional dropoff in correspondence over the summer months. In spite of this, however, we have a number of goodies to announce:

First and foremost - RSR #2 has been recorded and will be ready for release very shortly! Advance orders for this fine new album are being taken now. (See RECORDS)

Secondly, Joe Lamb fans will be glad to hear that Mills Music Inc. has finally released a number of the hitherto unpublished Lamb compositions. This folio - "Ragtime Treasures" - is discussed under SHEET MUSIC.

The third piece of news will be welcomed by local enthusiasts: we understand that Bob Darch will likely be returning to Toronto within the next four months. (See PERFORMERS)

In our other regular departments, Bob Ashforth reviews Wally Rose's "Ragtime Classics" album on page 59 and in this month's Performer Profile, Bob McGrath tells of a recent visit with veteran ragman Joe Jordan.

Society members will be saddened to learn that Holly Kinnear died on August 13th.

Holly was a true friend of ragtime; she shared with Jim a warm enthusiasm for the music, and for the aims of the Society. She particularly enjoyed seeing young people develop an interest in ragtime, and gave them every encouragement.

We join with our readers in extending condolences to Jim and the two boys.

Ragtime Society recording artist Tom Shea with two of his best-selling original compositions.

RECORDS

Encouraged by the fine response to our first recording venture last year, we have been negotiating with Tom Shea to do an encore. During July, Tom arrived in Toronto and a recording session was set up at Jim Kinnear's home. The result is RSR #2 - "Tom Shea Plays Classic and Western Rags" - a 12-inch LP containing a dozen fine numbers:

Mississippi Rag	Brun Campbell Express
Ma Ragtime Baby	R.F.D.
Swipesy Cakewalk	Oliver Road Rag
Creole Belles	Trillium Rag
Gladiolus Rag	Corinthian Rag
Peg Town Patrol	Rosebud Rag

In our opinion, this new album is well up to the standard set by RSR #1, both in the quality of the performance and the quality of the recording. Throughout the album Tom displays his tremendous rhythmic drive and, with his own compositions, shows the same wonderful inventiveness that produced "Spasm Rag" and "Prairie Queen."

A word about the album title - Tom feels (and we agree) that the majority of these original numbers reflect a pronounced midwestern influence - similar to "Prairie Queen" - hence the reference to "Western" rags. When you hear the infectious banjo-and-fiddle style of a piece like "R.F.D." we think you'll agree that the album is aptly named.

Mail your advance orders for RSR #2 <u>now</u> - $5.00 postpaid in Canada and the United States, add 50 cents for overseas orders. As soon as the required minimum number of orders has been received, we can start production of the album, so don't procrastinate!

SHEET MUSIC

We have received from Mills their latest - and perhaps most interesting - entry in the ragtime sheet music field: "Ragtime Treasures", the 13 "recently discovered original solos" by Joe Lamb. This folio is beautifully done and has a foreword by Rudi Blesh, the man who, with the late Harriet Janis, rediscovered Joe and told his story. The title page is reproduced on the back of this page.

We won't attempt to review these compositions here. Suffice it to say that not every one is an "American Beauty" or "Sensation", but for the most part they are unmistakably Lamb rags, with his traditional richness of melody. The folio is available from the Society at $3.00 postpaid.

No further word yet on Max Morath's "Guide to Ragtime" which we mentioned in the last issue, but you can preview one of its numbers (Tom Shea's "Trillium Rag") by ordering RSR #2 right away!

PERFORMERS

Readers outside the Toronto area will pardon us if we devote a few paragraphs to a matter of local interest - the possible return of Bob Darch.

For many long months now, former Club 76 patrons have been wandering around like lost souls, resigned to the fact that they have probably seen the last of their favorite ragtime performer. We don't want to raise any false hopes, but just before going to press we received a brief note from Bob outlining his future plans. It appears that Bob has formed a five-man band with the following lineup:

Banjo - Larry Schram
Cornet - Larry Getz
Tuba - Don Summers
1st Piano - Bob Darch
2nd Piano - Carlos Duncan

The group is rehearsing at the moment and negotiating for bookings in Toronto and the U.S. midwest. Nothing has been finalized yet, but there is a very strong possibility that they will appear at a well-known lower Yonge Street jazz emporium toward the end of the year.

Bob says that the band's feature numbers include Lazy Luka, Poison Ivy, Battle Hymn of the Republic, Saskatoon Rag and Eucamint Blues. Which would seem to indicate a departure from pure ragtime toward a "good time" type of offering. No doubt Bob's new venture will have the unique Darch quality and will be Grade A entertainment. It's pretty safe to say that if Bob does return to Toronto, he can count on a rousing reception from the faithful.

Herb Caen's column in the San Francisco Chronicle, July 7th, reports that Wally Rose, after a five-year stint at Gold Street, has moved to the Yankee Doodle on Powell Street.

One of the Society's newest members is Johnny Arpin, a talented young pianist-composer-arranger who professors at the Last Chance Saloon (Ports of Call) here in town. John is a relative newcomer to classic ragtime, but has really taken to it and is building up his sheet music library with Society material. Canadian readers will be interested to know that John has composed a couple of topical rags: "Centennial Rag" (featuring themes from "O Canada" and "Alouette") and, as a comment on the current political issue gripping the nation, a number called "Flag Rag."

Ragtime Treasures

PIANO SOLOS

by

JOSEPH F. LAMB

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1619 Broadway, New York 19, N. Y.

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RECORD REVIEW

"Ragtime Classics" by Wally Rose - Good Time Jazz M12034
Wally Rose, piano; Morty Corb, bass; Nick Fatool, drums

Top Liner Rag	Springtime Rag
Gladiolus Rag	King Porter Stomp
Red Pepper Rag	The Easy Winners
The Pearls	Pineapple Rag
Euphonic Sounds	The Cascades
Frog Legs Rag	Harlem Rag

This album is disappointing for two main reasons. First, with his impressive background of classical training and study, Wally Rose is one of the professionals best qualified to perform classic renditions of ragtime — but he chooses not to. Secondly, what he has chosen to do suffers from the use of rhythm accompaniment.

It is quite difficult for this reviewer to describe Wally's style in enthusiastic terms. It certainly has none of the bite of Morath's playing, nor anything like the strength or "guts" quality of Darch's style. If a comparison is needed, it could be said that Wally sounds very much like Lou Busch. Taken as a whole, the ensemble sounds like the rhythm section of a corn band playing a ricky-tick and strangely prim style of ragtime.

On this recording at least, Wally refuses to take ragtime seriously, which probably accounts for the presence of Nick Fatool and Morty Corb. In fact, because of the bass and drums some purists might go so far as to say that this album should be classed as a type of genteel honky-tonk rather than ragtime proper. Be that as it may, Nick Fatool's drumming does nothing to lessen the air of frivolity. The effect of his incessant brushwork on cymbal and snare is to give an uncanny "chuffa-chuffa-chuff" steam locomotive background to Wally's piano. 'Red Pepper' in particular sounds like a hilarious capsule version of 'The Great Train Chase of 1912.'

For enthusiasts who prefer a lighthearted treatment of ragtime, this album may have considerable appeal. However, it would be very interesting to hear the result if Wally could be persuaded to approach classic ragtime in his own right as a concert pianist.

PERFORMER PROFILE

Bob McGrath of Bellerose, N.Y., sent us this photo of veteran ragtimer Joe Jordan, plus a few notes on a recent visit to Joe's home in Tacoma, Washington.

Bob was in the U.S. Army, stationed at Ft. Lewis, Washington, when he first became interested in classic ragtime. The Pacific northwest seemed to have more of the authentic type of ragtime and more of the old-time flavor than Bob had found back home in New York.

In his search for records and sheet music, Bob came across the "Golden Reunion" album and saw from the liner notes that Joe Jordan's home was in nearby Tacoma. He obtained Joe's address from the record company and wrote him a letter saying he's like to meet him.

"I didn't really expect an answer," Bob says. "I practically flipped a few days later when Joe's daughter phoned me at the base and invited me to dinner.

"After we introduced ourselves, Joe said he was curious to know what he could do for me. I said I wanted to learn to play ragtime. He had me sit down at the piano and play what I thought was ragtime."

Bob confesses that this was a pretty embarassing moment: "About the only thing I could play in a fast sort of honky-tonk style was 'Yes Sir, That's My Baby.' I could see the disappointment on Joe's face, but he was very gracious; he played some of his compositions, and gave me an autographed copy of 'That Teasin Rag' and some pointers on playing it."

Bob and Joe spent the rest of the evening talking about music. "Joe is remarkably active for a man of over 80," Bob says. "He is still composing and has a very strong community spirit. He has written a new State of Washington song which has been adopted, a baseball song for the Tacoma Giants team and a religious song called 'The Chimes.'"

Bob adds that Joe is very interested in young people and tries to help them whenever he can. However, he doesn't think too highly of the younger generation's current taste in music, particularly rock and roll, mainly because it requires so little in the way of talent. Among Joe's favorite performers of today are singer Ray Charles and honky-tonk pianist Tiny Little.

SATIRE

the real truth about jazz origins

BY HARNEY B. PETERSEN

Evidence unearthed recently from the archives of the Denver Jazz Record Club has inspired the development of a new theory which at last explains the origin of jazz.

A letter from W. C. Handy to the Denver organization says that "More than fifty years ago (i. e., 1895) it was my good fortune to tour Colorado as bandmaster with Mahara's Minstrel and to witness "The Festival of Mountain and Plains" in Denver when seven hundred and fifty bandsmen played a march by that title. . . . I was impressed by a band from Salina, Kansas, playing an oddity called *Ragged Rapscallions.* From that time I began to arrange such novelties for my band and this led to *The Memphis Blues* and *St. Louis Blues* in the early part of the twentieth century."

From this it must be inferred that St. Louis, Missouri, was not the inspiration nor the real locale of *St. Louis Blues.* What really inspired the name must have been St. Louis Creek, which runs past Frazer, Colorado, and Aksel Nielsen's ranch. That this creek has more than local renown is substantiated by the fact that President Eisenhower spent his vacation this year fishing in it.

Extensive extrapolation of intuitive reasoning, however, has soared beyond the bounds of the Handy, Bolden, Clarence Williams, Jelly Roll origins to the logical conclusion that jazz was conceived and given form by the Swedes.

This minority, in the persons of the Wisconsin and Minnesota lumberjacks, left the northern part of the country at an early date, going down the Mississippi on the river boats to Louisiana, where they engaged in the lumbering off of the cypress swamps. In this rough and ready frontier atmosphere, intermarriage, especially in New Orleans, the great melting pot, produced such men as Bunk (Bunkhouse, after the near-forgotten Minnesota lumber camp) Johnson. Shortly afterwards, Joseph (King) Oliver arrived on the scene, and was amazed at the technique and invention of the unschooled musicians, with their near pure culture, in their isolated camps. He was immediately inspired to write *Snag It,* after the cry of the jacks on the mill ponds as a log drifted by.

Even earlier, the legendary Buddy Bolden was a cook in one of these camps. He would heap the food high until the jacks would shout "That's a plenty!" This atonal chorusing, with its underlying current of rejection, protest, and indigestion, was heard by J. Russel Robinson, later to join the Original Dixieland Jass Band, and obviously a Swede. He hummed the strain to a bunkmate who turned out to be none other than Mel Stitzel, who later recorded it with the New Orleans Rhythm Kings. That this is so is proved by the fact that to this day there are Stitzels living in Parkers Prairie, Minnesota.

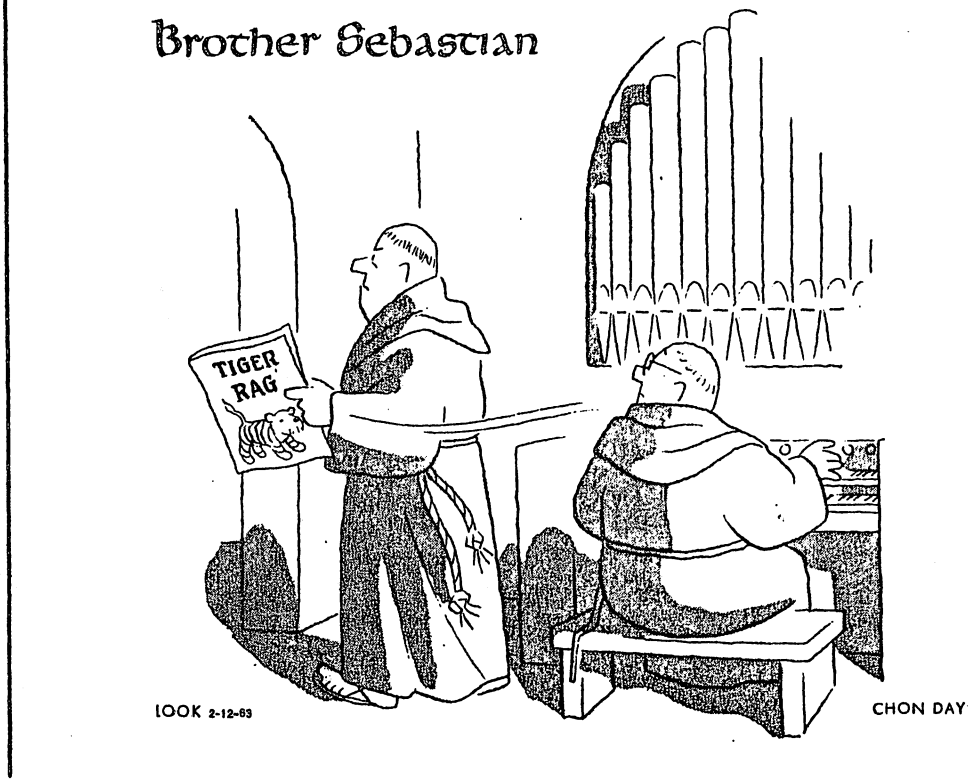
One of the traditional songs attributed to the Creole is *Eh, la Bas.* That this is but slightly changed from the joyful antiphonal chants of the sweaty lumberjacks as they returned from the hot forests—"Ah, the bath!"—is obvious.

Many traditional jazz tunes show the unmistakable influence of the Swedish lumberjacks whose music was colored by the lofty forests in which they worked and lived: Bessie Smith's *Weeping Willow Blues; You've Been a Good Ole Wagon* (lumber camp wagon depreciation was ferocious); Waller's *Willow Tree;* Hines' *Deep Forest;* and Herman's newer *Woodchoppers' Ball.* The derivation of "Maple Leaf Rag" is obvious. *Mahogany Hall Stomp* commemorates the cutting of the last remaining mahogany forests in the continental United States. One of the greatest of the jazz evergreens (a significant term, by the way!) was inspired by a lumberjack, member of a large family, who was unable to climb trees with the agility of some of his relatives. His despairing cry, "I wish I could shinny like my sister Kate" eventually became corrupted to the current version.

Pinetop Smith was born in a lumber camp under the most bizarre circumstances, from which he derived his name. Other giants of jazz whose names prove that they have some Swedish ancestry are Bernard Addison; Herman Chitteson; Vic Dickensen; Johnny Dodds (originally Doddsen); Duke Ellington (originally Ellingsen); Jimmy Harrisen; Fletcher Hendersen; Bill, James P., and Lonnie Johnson (Jensen); Oscar Petersen; and Teddy Wilsen.

Thus it seems there can no longer be a reasonable doubt that jazz came DOWN, rather than UP, the Mississippi.

Reprinted from the January, 1954 issue of "The Record Changer" by permission of the author, Harney Peterson.



RAGTIME ARTICLES

This is a gentle reminder that the newsletter is your publication; and this is an open invitation to our readers to submit articles of interest for publication. Ragtime is a pretty broad subject, we feel, and there is plenty of scope for discussion and opinions, plus items about performers and personalities.

We often receive letters containing the germ of a good article - but with time and pressure working against us, we just aren't able to follow these up as we should. If you would like to express yourself on your favorite subject (and we repeat: this is what the newsletter is for), all we ask is that you spend a little time and thought in putting it together. You don't have to be a professional writer or an English major to do it, either. (Our highly qualified editorial staff will be happy to help edit your material into shape if need be.)

For instance: someone mentioned the other day that he had sat through a movie called "Man's Favorite Sport?" in which was shown a sort of player piano or nickelodeon museum. This place was located (he thought) in or near San Francisco. If such a place exists, how about someone in the S.F. area volunteering to do an article on it? Let's hear from you!

FROM OUR MAILBAG

Ragtime was featured at the New York World's Fair during the summer: the Historical Institute of American Music presented an 11-day seminar on the different types of American music forms. On July 11th at the United States Pavillion they presented "American Piano Rolls: Ragtime and Jazz."

The program notes were written by special consultant Mike Montgomery (who gave the Society a very nice credit) and gave a mouth-watering list of roll selections which were played for the audience. Included were hand-played recordings by Joplin, Jelly Roll Morton, James P. Johnson, Luckey Roberts, Eubie Blake, Fats Waller and George Gershwin. The selections were preceded by a discourse on piano rolls, their manufacture, and the mechanics and capabilities of player pianos.

If any subscribers were lucky enough to attend this concert, we urge you to let us hear about it.

Gary Ellison, "The Ragtime Prince," whose picture was featured in the May issue, writes that he has since bought a new (old) piano: "It is a Wing & Son upright grand which was used for several years by Bob Darch and Johnny Maddox at Mickey Mantle's Holiday Inn in Joplin."

Gary, who is a college junior, was just winding up a three-week stay at the Hickory Hills Country Club in Springfield, Mo. at the time of his letter. He has also played several conventions and a concert at Southwest Missouri State College, and reports a lot of ragtime interest wherever he goes. Keep up the fine work, Gary!

Karl Kramer of Beverly Hills has suggested some subjects for articles: "Joplin's ragtime opera, 'Guest of Honor.' I know the music has been lost, but there are people alive today who heard it and might give you an impression. Was it really ragtime like his piano music, or folk music like Treemonisha? Is it possible a copy exists somewhere, someplace?

"Also ragtime on early phonograph records. Why was it so bad? Even the traditional New Orleans jazz orchestras play classic rags very poorly. Is it just that they didn't understand, had to play at too fast a tempo to please their audiences, or confused it with jazz?"

These are good questions. Anyone have the answers?